

**REMINDER: Vessel Monitoring System
Required for Pelagic Longline Vessels
Effective September 1, 2003**

This fax notice serves as a reminder of the September 1, 2003, effective date for the regulation requiring all pelagic longline vessels issued permits to fish for highly migratory species to have a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) installed and operating. As the regulation is applicable only to vessels **leaving port** with pelagic longline gear on board on or after September 1, 2003, vessels with pelagic longline gear on board that are at sea, engaged in fishing activities, as of September 1, 2003 will not be required to return to port for VMS purposes. All vessels that leave port on or after September 1, 2003, with pelagic longline gear on board, will be required to have VMS installed and operating (50 CFR 635.69).

NOAA Fisheries issued a notice of the September 1, 2003, effective date for implementation of the VMS requirement in the Federal Register (68 FR 37772, June 25, 2003). In addition, a reinstatement of effective date was issued on August 1, 2003 (68 FR 45169), affirming the September 1, 2003, effective date.

Pelagic longline means a longline that is suspended by floats in the water column and that is not fixed to or in contact with the ocean bottom. Pelagic longline gear is on board when (1) a power-operated longline hauler, (2) a mainline, (3) floats capable of supporting the mainline, and (4) leaders (gangions) with hooks are on board.

The approved VMS unit consists of both a mobile transceiver unit placed on the vessel and the communication service provider that supplies the wireless link between the unit on the vessel and the shoreside data user. An installation and activation checklist must be filled out and returned to NOAA Enforcement. To obtain copies of the list of NOAA Fisheries approved VMS mobile transmitting units, communications service providers, installation checklist or other information regarding VMS write to NOAA Fisheries Office for Law Enforcement (OLE), 8484 Georgia Avenue, Suite 415, Silver Spring, MD 20910, or contact Jonathan Pinkerton, National VMS Program Manager, phone 301-427-2300, or Fred Kyle, Special Agent, NMFS Office of Law Enforcement, Southeast Division, 727-570-5351. To obtain copies of the installation checklists and approved devices and providers please visit:
<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ole/Southeast/SED/VesselMonitoringSystem.htm>.

This FAX notice is a courtesy to the HMS fishery participants to help keep you informed about your fishery. Official notice of Federal fishing actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of Federal Register.

John H. Dunnigan
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

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